

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 705

By Woodson

A RESOLUTION expressing support for the work of Every Child
Outdoors - Tennessee.

WHEREAS, scientific research shows that children are increasingly distanced from nature, even while a growing number of researchers and scientists have determined the benefits of children's outdoor activities and that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual development; and

WHEREAS, the mission of Every Child Outdoors – Tennessee is to promote and support opportunities that encourage children to engage with and experience the outdoors in order to further prevent this disconnect from nature. In keeping with this mission, the organization has developed a Tennessee Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights to raise awareness of the value of outdoor experiences for children; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights is a list of experiences from which every child in Tennessee would benefit and that every child before entering high school should have the opportunity to experience; and

WHEREAS, childhood obesity in Tennessee has doubled and adolescent obesity in Tennessee has tripled; actively spending time in nature improves physical fitness, promotes curiosity, improves learning, and provides joy and a sense of well-being; and

WHEREAS, children's understanding of nature is so eclipsed by their attraction to television and video games that the average child has lost his or her connection to the natural world; and

WHEREAS, addressing the environmental challenges of our time requires an active citizenry, and providing children with outdoor nature experiences increases their involvement in the stewardship of our environment; and

WHEREAS, a vital step in this process is to actively engage citizens in building their capacity to facilitate opportunities for children to experience nature and to learn in safe places; and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee has a longstanding commitment to its natural heritage, connecting its people to the land and passing traditions on to future generations through outdoor activities such as farming, fishing, and hunting; and

WHEREAS, our state is endowed with a gloriously diverse landscape, ranging from streams and mountain vistas to forests, farmlands, and Mississippi River lowlands; from the playlots and backyards of our cities to the parks and fields of our rural lands, Tennessee's outdoor splendor should be shared with the children and families of this State; and

WHEREAS, rich in educational initiatives and conservation organizations, Tennessee not only boasts the finest state park system in the country, but also possesses outstanding local parks and recreation agencies, as well as outstanding school and civic organizations, all of which are actively engaged in promoting outdoor recreation and environmental education, and

WHEREAS, providing access to nature and to programs that provide nature exploration opportunities for children to encourage discovery and creative play is of the utmost importance to our society; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby express our full support for the work of Every Child Outdoors - Tennessee and its more than 100 supporting organizations in their efforts to ensure that all of Tennessee's children have the opportunities and benefits of exploring our State's natural world.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support and endorse the Tennessee Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights, which states that every child should have the opportunity to walk in the woods, play outside, explore nature, watch wildlife, grow a garden, splash in the water, camp under the stars, learn to swim, climb a tree, go fishing, fly a kite, and visit a farm.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.